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SPAWN



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MARIANE
BRIAD

image[®] COMICS PRESENTS:

"WARRIORS"



story

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a special thanks to

DANNY MIKI

also a special thanks to our
"Hangin' with Todd" Winner

DAVID BLUESTEIN



Spawn #44 Summary:

Tiffany, vowing to make a name for herself and take Angela's place as the Priority A-1 angel, knows destroying Spawn ensures her promotion. Meanwhile, Spawn, who was almost destroyed by the Curse's experimentation, continues to rejuvenate himself. Wild animals help by bringing forth their evil to give life to a hellspawn weakened. As his body slowly grows stronger, Spawn experiences flashbacks of the Curse's extractions, and of his love for his wife, Wanda. Tiffany confronts Spawn and is happy to find him in recharge. A fierce battle ensues and Tiffany is just about to decapitate the weakened Spawn as the issue ends. Back in New York, detectives Burke and Williams, after being fired from the precinct, begin to investigate why Banks took the fall when the file they gave to the newspaper indicted several others.

FOR IMAGE COMICS
LARRY MARDER - exec. director

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DECAPITATION.

THE ONLY WAY TO
END THE BATTLE,
TO ACHIEVE
TRUE VICTORY
OVER THE
ACCURSED
HELLSPAWN.


THOSE WHO'VE BEEN TUTORED
TO HUNT HELL'S OFFICERS--IN-
TRAINING KNOW THIS-- AND
KNOW AS WELL THAT, LACKING
HEAVEN'S REGULATION
WEAPON, THIS IS THE
RECOMMENDED METHOD.

ONCE THE HELLSPAWN
HAS BEEN SUFFICIENTLY
WEAKENED OR
DISORIENTED, A FINAL
BLOW-- CLEAN AND
SWIFT-- VOIDS THE
CREATURE AND ITS
LIVING SHELL FROM
THIS LEVEL OF
EXISTENCE.

ITS SEVERED
HEAD IS PROOF
OF THAT
FINALITY.

THEN AND
ONLY
THEN WILL
THE UNDEAD
FINALLY
DIE.





FOR THE VICTOR, IT
MEANS AN IMMEDIATE
PROMOTION INTO
FLIGHT LEVEL ONE.

THIS SHOULD BE
THE RIGHTEOUS
GOAL OF
EVERY ANGEL.

EVEN FOR THIS PRIZE, THOUGH,
FEW ANGELS HAVE VENTURED
INTO BATTLE AGAINST THE
HELLSPAWN. IT'S VIRTUALLY A
SUICIDAL ACT, WITH NO
DOCUMENTED SUCCESS BY
ANY STUDENT.

IF EVER THAT DAY
COMES TO PASS,
A NEW STAR
WILL SHINE IN
GOD'S RANKS.

HER PRAISES
SUNG FOR ALL
ETERNITY.


HOLY
MASTER, YOU'VE
ANSWERED MY
PRAYERS--
GIVEN ME
STRENGTH TO...

FOR SHE WILL
NOT HAVE BEEN
FOOLED BY
THE SPAWN'S
TRICKERY.

THE
HEAD--
IT'S...?!

IT'S NOT
REAL!
THE DAMNED
THING'S USING
ITS MAGIC!

NOT
QUITE...



THE CREATURE'S CLOAK HAD BRIEFLY OBSCURED ITS HEAD... LONG ENOUGH FOR A MOUND OF HIDDEN WORMS TO SLITHER FROM THE HUNDREDS OF FOLDS TWISTING THROUGHOUT THE BLOOD-RED CAPE...

...TAKING
SHAPE RIGHT
NEXT TO THE
HELLSPAWN'S
EXPOSED
THROAT.

SHE MIGHT NOT HAVE BEEN CAUGHT UNAWARES HAD THIS YOUNG ANGEL NOTICED THAT HER FALLEN PREY HAD BEEN WEARING A MASK BUT MOMENTS EARLIER.

TOOK
THE BAIT,
DID YOU?

GOOD.


I DON'T
KNOW WHY
ANY OF THIS
IS HAPPENING,
BUT YOU TELL
HEAVEN I'M NOT
READY
TO DIE!



HOW
DARE THEY
SEND A
CHILD
TO DO THEIR
KILLING?!

AL SIMMONS PLAYS THE GAME.

HELL'S SYMBIOTIC UNIFORM
IS ASSISTING HIS BROKEN
BODY'S EVERY MOVE. AL
KNOWS THERE MUST BE NO
SIGN OF WEAKNESS.



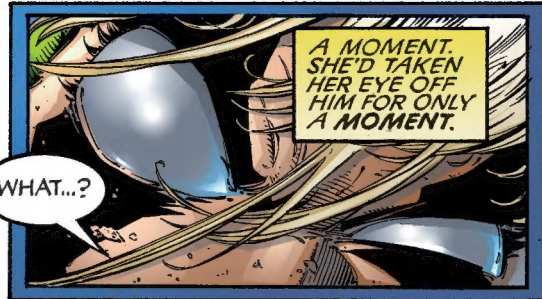
THE PACKAGE
MUST APPEAR
WHOLE: SYMBIONT
AND LIVERY
WORKING AS ONE.

ANGELA
WAS TOO
GOOD
FOR YOUR
GOD.



ANGELA.
THAT
TRAITOROUS
WHORE.
I'LL NOT LET
EITHER OF YOU
MOCK OUR
CAUSE.

NOT
EVER!



A MOMENT.
SHE'D TAKEN
HER EYE OFF
HIM FOR ONLY
A MOMENT.



NOW, THE NIGHT
WIND HOWLS,
RESONATING IN
ALL DIRECTIONS.
THE ROGUE ANGEL
PREPARES FOR
ANYTHING.

OR EVERY-
THING.

SHOW
YOUR
SELF
DEMON!



IT DOES.



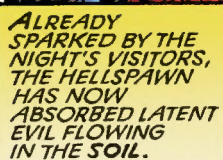
UNDERGROUND,
WHERE
MADNESS
REIGNS.



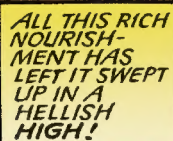
FROM THE ONE
DIRECTION
SHE HADN'T
PREPARED FOR.

SHE'D BEEN TAUGHT
THAT IN THE ABSENCE
OF SUNLIGHT DWELLS
EVIL. AND THAT THE
GREATEST EVIL LIVES
BELOW... UNDER-
GROUND, IN ETERNAL
BLACKNESS.

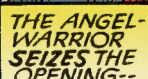
WHERE GOD'S
GRACE IS
FORBIDDEN.
FOREVER.



ALREADY
SPARKED BY THE
NIGHT'S VISITORS,
THE HELLSPAWN
HAS NOW
ABSORBED LATENT
EVIL FLOWING
IN THE SOIL.



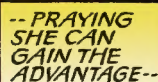
ALL THIS RICH
NOURISH-
MENT HAS
LEFT IT SWEEP
UP IN A
HELLISH
HIGH!



THE ANGEL-
WARRIOR
SEIZES THE
OPENING--



... AND
MAKING IT
CARELESS.



-- PRAYING
SHE CAN
GAIN THE
ADVANTAGE--



-- AND SOMEHOW END
THIS UNHOLY BATTLE.



...FUNERAL OF LOUIS BANKS, CHIEF OF NEW YORK CITY'S 12TH PRECINCT. A LONE MOTORCYCLE ESCORT WAS THE TOKEN HONOR GUARD FOR THIS CONTROVERSIAL FIGURE.

HIS FREQUENT CAREER SHIFTS --PRIVATE SECURITY OPERATOR, CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE OPERATIVE, POLICE COMMANDER--SHOW A MAN OF RARE AMBITION. INFORMATION LEAKED JUST BEFORE HIS SUICIDE, HOWEVER, RAISED ALLEGATIONS OF LONG-STANDING TIES TO ORGANIZED CRIME.

SEVERAL DRAMATIC EVENTS HAVE BEEN TIED TO BANKS. AN ATTACK MONTHS AGO ON THE C.I.A.'S NEW YORK OFFICES IS SEEN AS A REVENGE ATTACK ON HIS FORMER EMPLOYERS. THE BOMBING MINUTES LATER OF A NEIGHBORING SECURITIES BROKERAGE WAS THEN INTENDED TO ASSIST HIS AGENTS IN THEIR ESCAPE. THE CHILD-KILLING SPREE OF WILLIAM KINCAID HAS BEEN IDENTIFIED AS PART OF AN EXTORTION SCHEME.

THE N.Y.P.D.'S OFFICE OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS HAS LAUNCHED AN INVESTIGATION, QUIETING FOR NOW THE POINTED QUESTIONS RAISED BY SOME MEDIA OUTLETS.



NOTHING SAYS 'NEW YORK' MORE THAN A POIGNANT DISPLAY. OF *COURSE* I'M TALKING ABOUT FUNERALS. THE BOYS IN BLUE BURIED THEIR DARKEST KNIGHT YESTERDAY, IN THE FORM OF THE BOWERY'S CHIEF LOUIS BANKS.

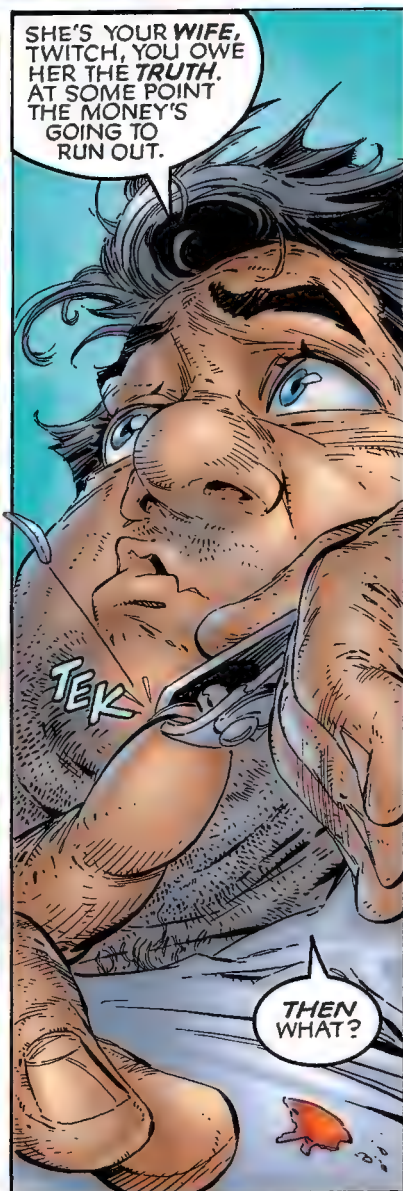
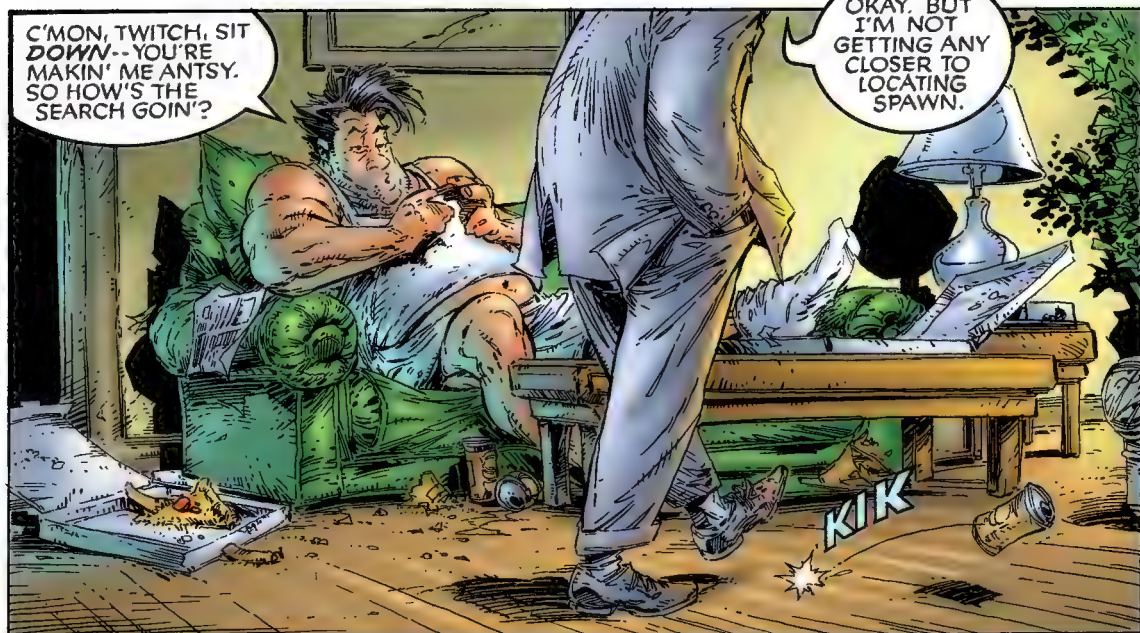
IN CLEVER COUNTERPOINT TO HIS SHORT-COMINGS WITH PROCESSES OF *JUSTICE*, BANKS' SEND-OFF WAS THE *MODEL* OF RESTRAINT. THE PROCESSION WAS LED BY A SOLITARY OFFICER ON A MOTORCYCLE... A SIGHT MORE HEART-RENDING THAN TWO COPS IN A SQUAD CAR COULD *POSSIBLY* HAVE BEEN, AND PROBABLY EASIER TO ASSIGN. BRINGING UP THE REAR WAS THE HEARSE ITSELF, CARRYING ONLY THE FUNERAL DIRECTOR, THE LATE CHIEF, AND HIS WIDOW. WHAT *TASTE!*

MY SOURCES TELL ME THE DECEASED WORE BLACK.



HERE'S ONE FOR THE BOOKS. IN THE CATEGORY "*DECEASED WILD MEN WHO DIDN'T KNOW HOW OR WHEN TO STOP,*" COULD ANY NOMINEE BE MORE OF A SHOO-IN THAN OUR OWN *CHIEF BANKS*? NOT *ONLY* WAS HE AT ONE TIME OR ANOTHER A MEMBER OF EVERY SECURITY OR POLICING SERVICE KNOWN TO *MAN*, BUT, IF ALL OF OFFICIALDOM IS TO BE BELIEVED, HE WAS *AT THE SAME TIME* MASTERMINDING CRIMINAL AND TRAITOROUS ACTS AFFECTING EVERYONE SOUTH OF WESTCHESTER COUNTY! CHIEF BANKS, *YOU THE MAN!*

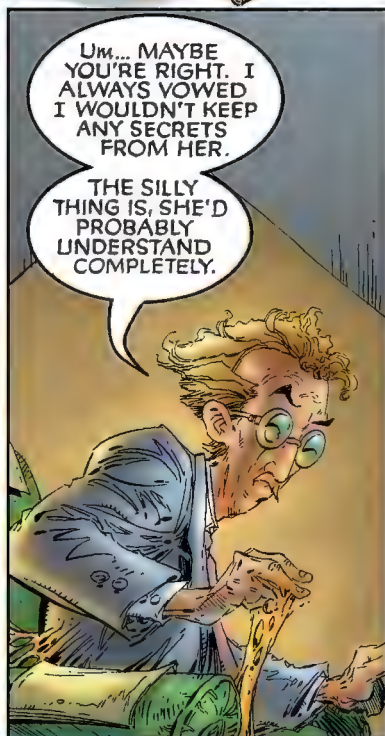
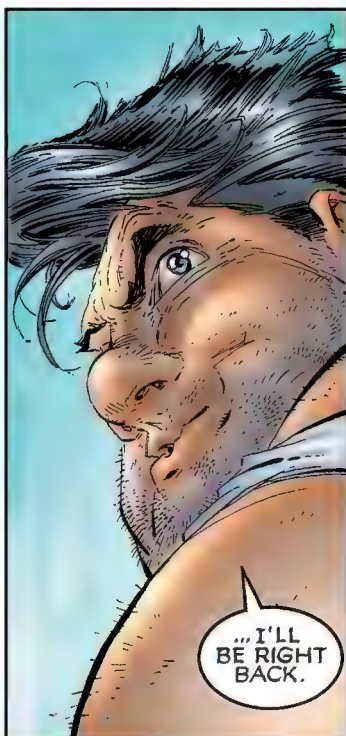
MY CONFIDENCE IN HIS NOMINATION IS BACKED UP BY THE UNANIMITY OF THE *FINGER-POINTING*. THE WORD ON THE STREET AND IN THE EXECUTIVE OFFICES IS THAT OUR MAN BANKS *SINGLE-HANDEDLY* RAISED THE *MONEY*, PROCURED THE *ORDINANCE*, RECRUITED *AND* TRAINED HIS OWN *PRIVATE ARMY*, AND CARRIED OUT *SEVERAL* SUCCESSFUL OPERATIONS WHILE IN THE EMPLOY OF NEW YORK'S FINEST. OF *COURSE* HE DIED CHILDLESS. WHEN WOULD HE HAVE FOUND THE TIME TO RAISE KIDS *AND* AN ARMY?



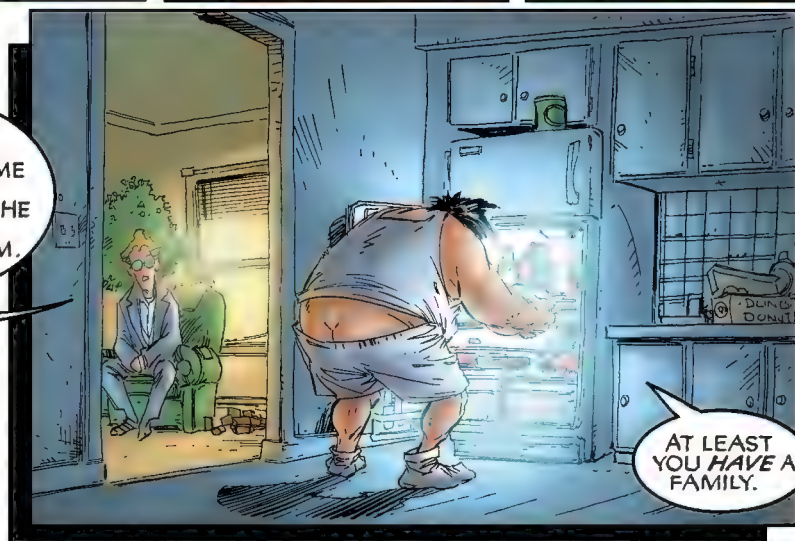
LOOK, I'M NOT TRYING TO RUN YOUR LIFE, BUT WE BOTH KNOW THAT SOONER OR LATER THEY'LL FIND OUT WE WERE **FIRE**D.

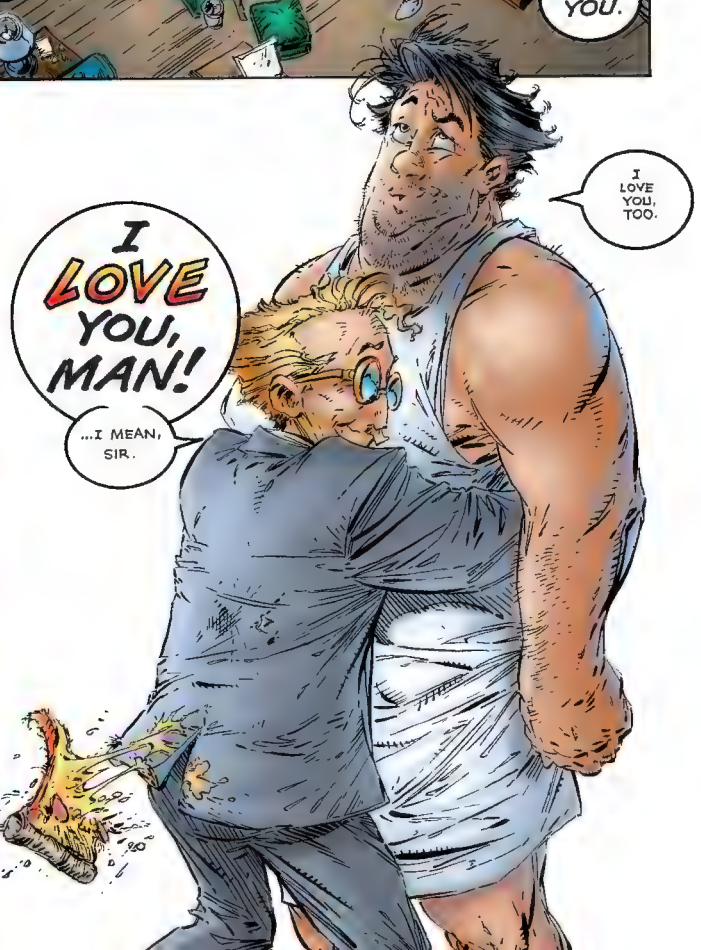
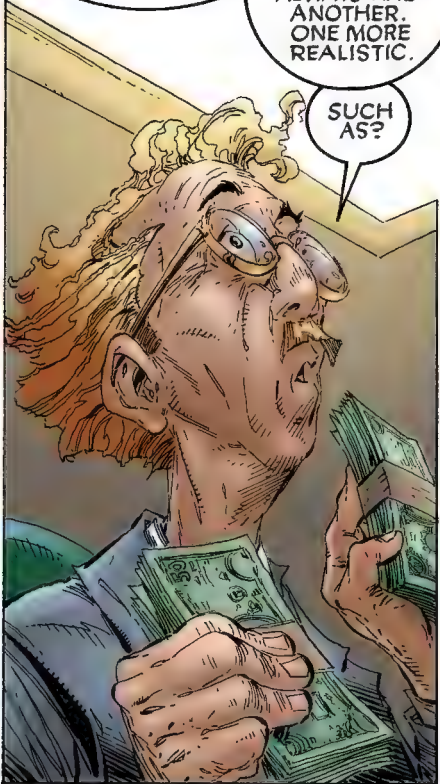
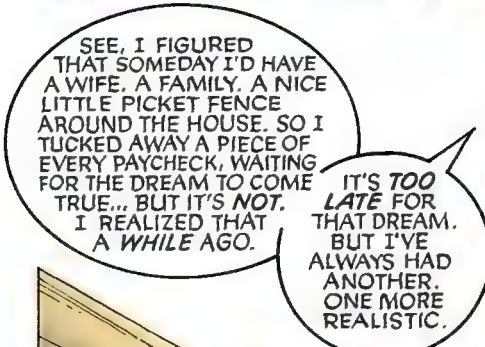
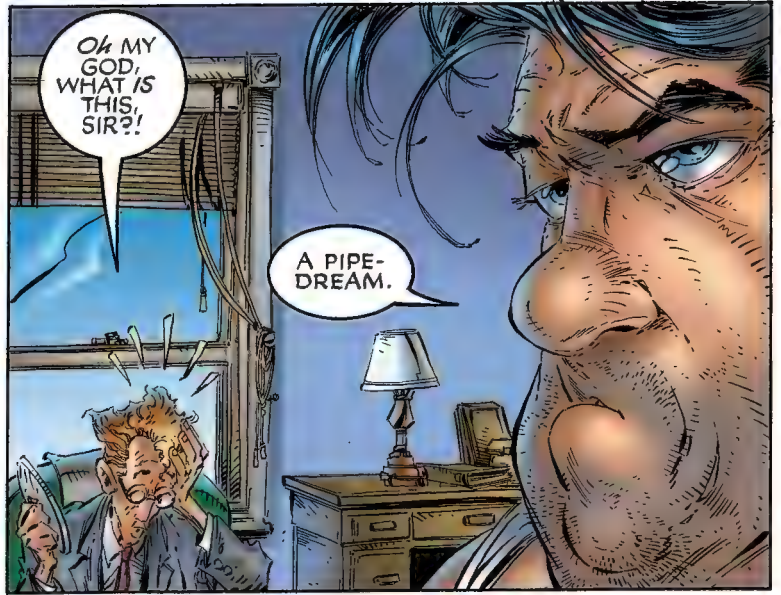
THEN, THEY'LL BE WONDERING WHERE YOU'VE BEEN SPENDING ALL YOUR FREE TIME. YOU DON'T **NEED** THOSE COMPLICATIONS.

I GUESS I'M HOPING THAT IF WE FIND SPAWN AND SORT THROUGH THE WHOLE CHIEF BANKS SUICIDE FIASCO, THEN THE BOARD WILL SEE WE WERE **WRONGLY** DISMISSED, AND **REINSTATE** US.



IT MUST BE SOME MALE THING, ME WANTING TO PROVIDE FOR THE FAMILY, TAKE CARE OF THEM.





LEGEND HAS CALLED IT
"THE BLACK DISPERSAL."
THE DETAILS MAY DIFFER IN
REGION, BUT THE ACT
REMAINS FAIRLY
CONSISTENT.

A SILENT SIGNAL
GOES OUT, ALERTING
ALL OCCUPANTS OF
THE SHADOWED
LANDS.

'LIGHT' IS
TRESPASSING
ONCE AGAIN.

HELLSPAWN!
MOVE
YOURSELF!

HE HASN'T
BEGUN HIS
REGENERA-
TION, YET.

SO, THE
UNWANTED
VISITOR
MUST BE
DISTRACTED...
LULLED INTO
A FALSE
SENSE OF
SECURITY...

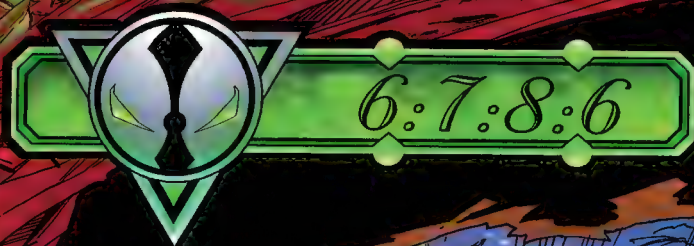
... UNTIL THEY HAVE
LINGERED PAST THE
POINT OF NO RETURN.

SNARED IN A
HIDDEN TRAP.

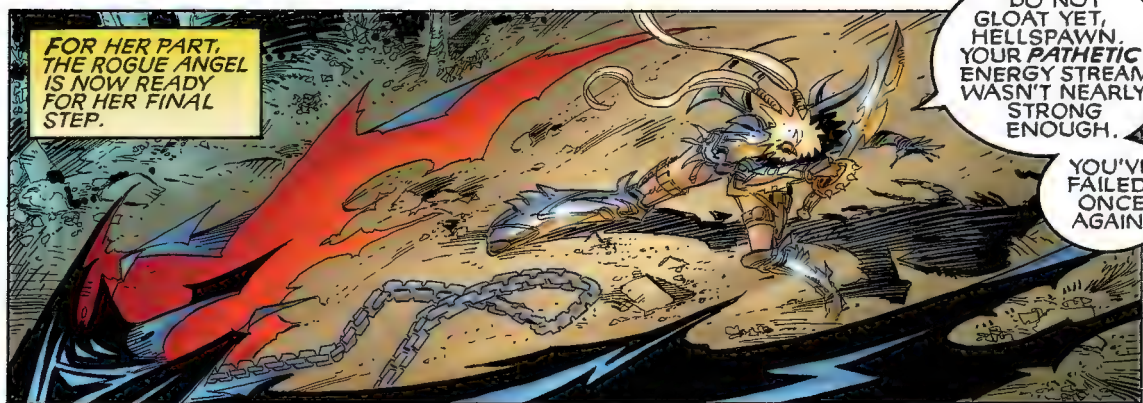
CONDENSING ITS INTERNAL
NEURO-SYSTEMS FLOW,
THE HELLSPAWN FORCES
EACH PLASM STRAND TO
GATHER ITS DARK EVIL TO
A SINGLE POINT:

A CONCENTRATE
OF PURE, MALICIOUS
ENERGY.

IT IS THEN RELEASED,
USUALLY THROUGH
THE CHEST, IN A
CONVULSIVE EXPLO-
SION THAT SHOWERS
ITS INTENDED TARGET
WITH THE UNSPEAK-
ABLE AURA OF THE
DAMNED.



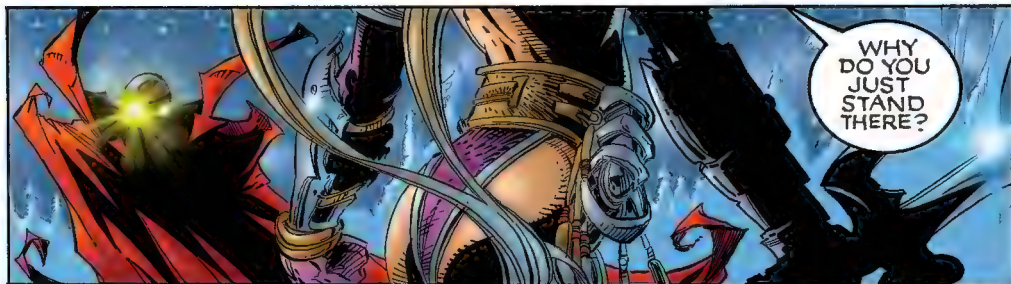
NOW TAINTED, THE
VICTIM BECOMES
A BEACON.



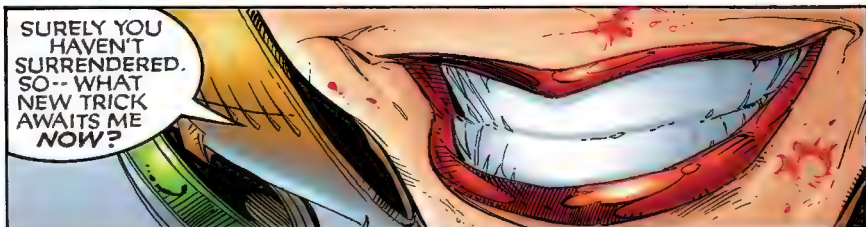
FOR HER PART,
THE ROGUE ANGEL
IS NOW READY
FOR HER FINAL
STEP.

DO NOT
GLOAT YET,
HELLSPAWN.
YOUR *PATHETIC*
ENERGY STREAM
WASN'T NEARLY
STRONG
ENOUGH.

YOU'VE
FAILED
ONCE
AGAIN.



WHY
DO YOU
JUST
STAND
THERE?



SURELY YOU
HAVEN'T
SURRENDERED.
SO-- WHAT
NEW TRICK
AWAITS ME
NOW?

THE "DISPERSAL":
WHEN HELL'S OFFSPRING
PASSES OFF THE
PHYSICAL END OF
BATTLE...

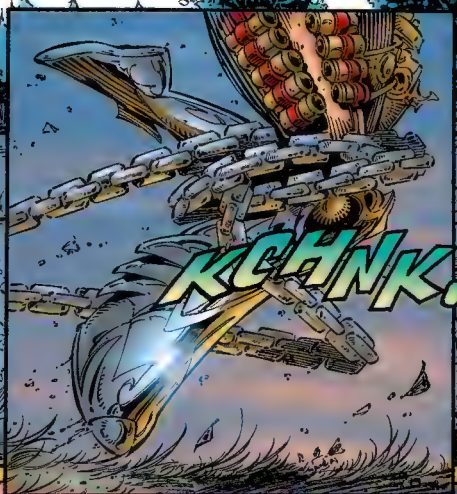
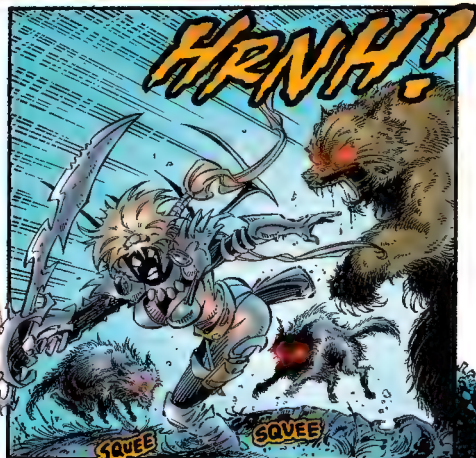


...TO THOSE
THAT HEED
THE BEACON'S
SIREN CALL...

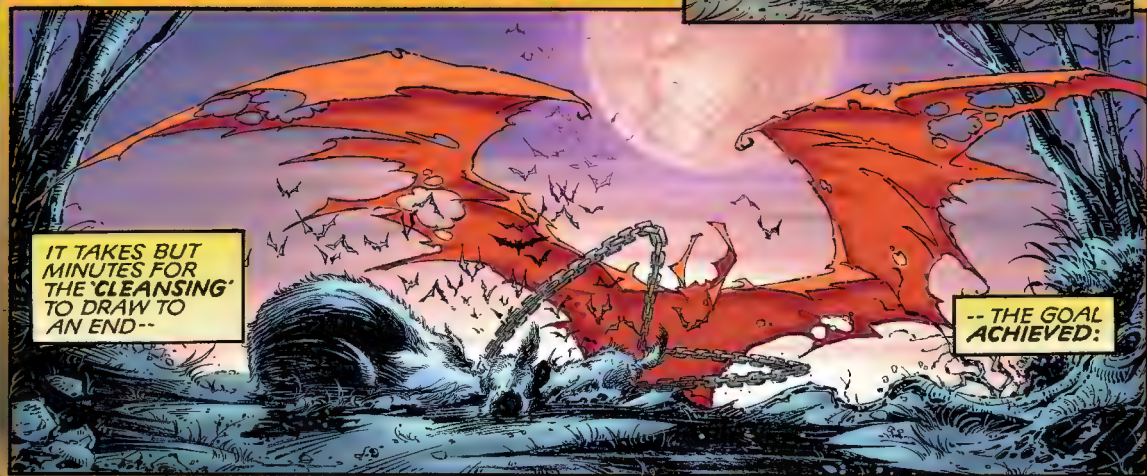
...THOSE EAGER TO CAST
OUT ANY WHO SERVE
THE LIGHT!



ANY WHO SERVE
THE WILL OF GOD.



IT TAKES BUT
MINUTES FOR
THE 'CLEANSING'
TO DRAW TO
AN END--



-- THE GOAL
ACHIEVED:

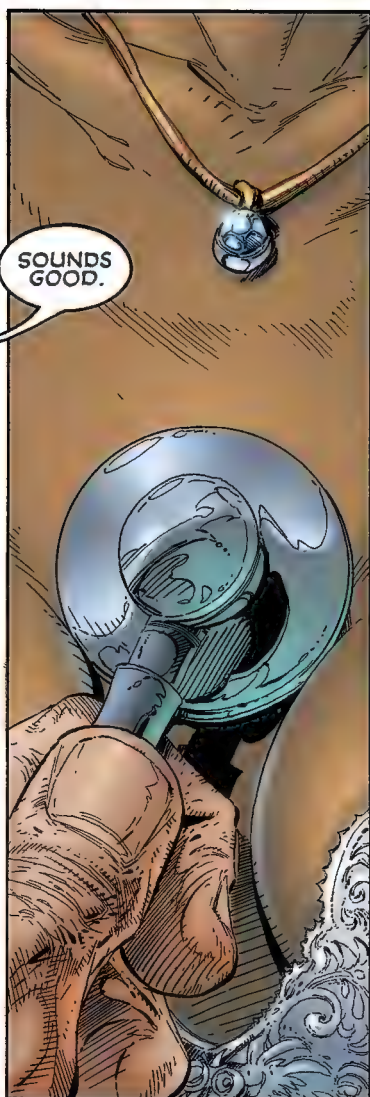


THE
INTRUDER
HAS BEEN
BANISHED.

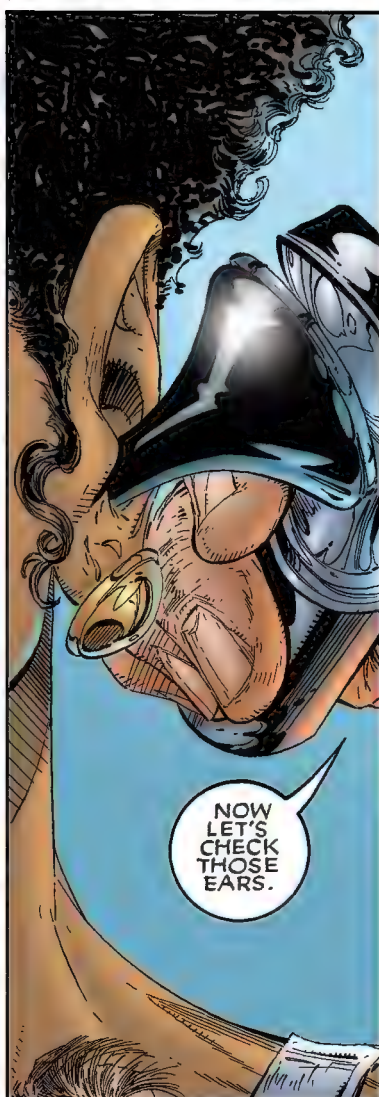
THE NIGHTBEASTS,
THEIR MISSION
FULFILLED, WANDER
AWAY. NIGHT
RESUMES ITS
NATURAL BALANCE.

THIS IS
INSANE.

HIS CLOAK WHIPS INTO
THE COOL AIR, PROCLAIMING
VICTORY WITH ITS DANCE.



SOUNDS GOOD.

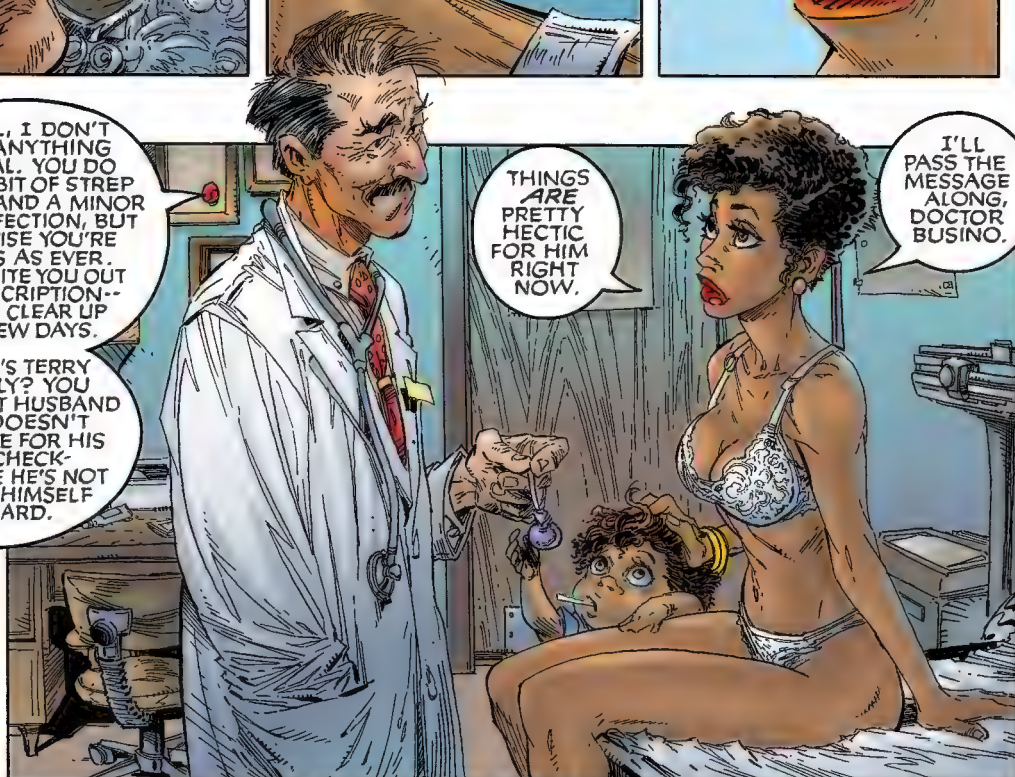


NOW LET'S CHECK THOSE EARS.



OPEN UP, A BIT WIDER.

OKAY, THANK YOU, WANDA.



WELL, I DON'T SEE ANYTHING UNUSUAL. YOU DO HAVE A BIT OF STREP THROAT AND A MINOR VIRAL INFECTION, BUT OTHERWISE YOU'RE STRONG AS EVER. I'LL WRITE YOU OUT A PRESCRIPTION-- YOU'LL CLEAR UP IN A FEW DAYS.

SAY, HOW'S TERRY BEEN LATELY? YOU *KNOW* THAT HUSBAND OF YOURS DOESN'T GET IN HERE FOR HIS REGULAR CHECK-UPS. HOPE HE'S NOT PUSHING HIMSELF TOO HARD.

THINGS *ARE* PRETTY HECTIC FOR HIM RIGHT NOW.

I'LL PASS THE MESSAGE ALONG, DOCTOR BUSINO.

"UNFORTUNATELY,
I THINK I'VE
PASSED MY COUGH
ON TO HIM."

Koff

Koff

I SWEAR
THESE
LATE NIGHTS
ARE GOING
TO KILL ME
YET.

AT LEAST I'M
MAKING SOME
HEADWAY.



ONE MORE THING TO
TRACK... A PARTICULAR
DEFENSE DEPARTMENT
ARMS SHIPMENT. IT'LL
LIST THE RECIPIENT
NATIONS... AND TELL
ME BY DEFAULT WHO
SHOULDN'T HAVE
THAT HARDWARE.

THEN, WITH A CROSS-CHECK ON NATO
SATELLITE DATA, I'LL FIND IF ANYONE'S
BEING CARELESS HIDING THEIR NEW TOYS.

CROSS-CHECKING THAT AGAINST
OUR INTERNAL TRAVEL LOGS AND
WHAT OUR CONTACTS AMONG
THE ARMS MERCHANTS HAVE
HEARD SHOULD POINT TO
SOMEONE AT THIS OFFICE
WHO'S SET UP A LITTLE
BUSINESS ON THE SIDE.

LIKE
WYNN.
HE'S...

Koff
Koff
Hack
Koff
KF

UGGH!


I FEEL
LIKE
CRAP.

TERRY FITZGERALD
WILL SOON WISH
HE'D LISTENED
TO HIS BODY.



HIS ALLEYS. HE'S
COME BACK TO
THEM. AGAIN.

HE CAN'T QUITE REMEMBER
HOW LONG HE'S BEEN GONE.
AWHILE. THAT'S ALL HE
KNOWS. IT HAS BEEN AWHILE.



FOLLOWING HIS CAPTURE
BY THE CURSE, AND HIS
TRAVELS ACROSS FOUR
STATES, HE HAS
RETURNED HOME.

ALL THIS
MADNESS. THIS
INSANITY. IT
MUST BE SLOWED,
HE THINKS.

IT'S TIME
TO BE HOME,
IN THE
FURTHEST
REACHES OF
'RAT CITY.'

A REMINDER
OF HIS
ABDUCTION
GREET'S HIS
RETURN.



YOU
CAN'T RUN
FROM IT,
AL.

COG!

IT'S PART
OF YOUR
LIFE NOW. IT
WON'T GO
AWAY.



STILL,
IT'S GOOD
TO HAVE
YOU
BACK.

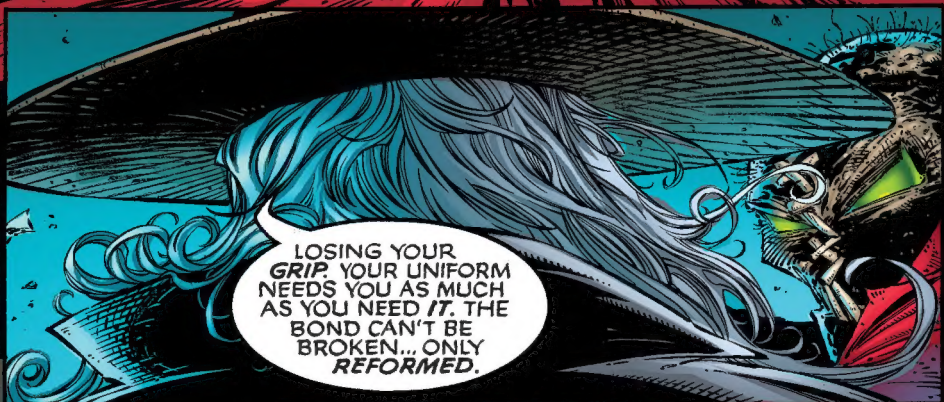


THESE
REAR WALLS...
THIS PLACE...
IT'S ALL I
HAVE, NOW.


EVERYTHING
ELSE IS OUT OF
CONTROL. ESPECIALLY
MY COSTUME. IT'S
TAKEN OVER-- TAKEN
ME OVER.

THEN
WRESTLE
IT BACK.
ASSERT
YOUR
POWERS.


WHAT
THE HELL
DO YOU
THINK
I'VE BEEN
DOING?!



LOSING YOUR
GRIP. YOUR UNIFORM
NEEDS YOU AS MUCH
AS YOU NEED *IT*. THE
BOND CAN'T BE
BROKEN... ONLY
REFORMED.



YOUR
SYMBIOTE IS
MORPHING, AL.
FASTER THAN IT
SHOULD. YOU HAVE
TO **SLOW** THE ACCELE-
RATION. HARNESS ITS
ENERGY. THEN FIGHT
TO BECOME THE
WARRIOR YOU
NEED TO BE.




BUT WHY'S
THE COSTUME
DOING THIS?

SOME-
THING MUST
HAVE TRAUMA-
TIZED IT. WHAT
HAPPENED WHEN
YOU WERE
GONE?

WE WERE
SEPARATED.
THE CURSE
TOOK US
APART.



AND YOUR
OTHER
BATTLES?



I... I KILLED AN ANGEL. WELL, NO. IT WAS THE COSTUME. I DIDN'T HAVE ANY CHOICE.

NOT THAT I TRIED TO FIGHT IT. THE ANGEL HAD IT COMING TO HER. HEAVEN SEEMS TO HAVE A PISSY ATTITUDE ABOUT SPAWNS.

THEIR HISTORY WITH GOD HASN'T BEEN VERY BENIGN.

THAT'S OBVIOUS.


YOUR OUTER SHELL HAS ADVANCED TOO FAR TO RELINQUISH CONTROL. IT CRAVES EVIL -- YEARS TO BE IN ITS PRESENCE. THAT'S HOW IT FEEDS -- HOW IT LIVES.

WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO NOW IS **TRAIN** IT. BECOME ITS **MASTER**. DO YOU UNDERSTAND? **NOT ITS HOST. ITS MASTER.**

YOU HAVE TO HAVE CONTROL.

AND IF I DON'T?

THEN GOD HELP US ALL.



MY BODY'S ALMOST HEALED NOW. EVERYTHING IS REATTACHED. HOPEFULLY, THE COSTUME WILL LET ME TAKE CHARGE NOW.

NO. IT'S NOT THAT SIMPLE.

HOURS PASS IN SILENCE, AND AT LAST AL SIMMONS' MIND ACHIEVES THE EQUIVALENT OF SLEEP.

THEN IT MOVES... THE COSTUME...

...CAREFUL NOT TO WAKE ITS HOST-- TRYING TO FIND THE IDEAL SPOT.

MULTIPLY.

THRIVE.

A PLACE WHERE IT CAN GROW.

THEN THE LIVING CARAPACE SETTLES BACK DOWN, CONTENT TO HAVE FOUND A HOME FOR HIS WORMS. HIS CARRIERS.

HIS EVIL.





Tyrant
Lizard
King

EMPIRE